

## The stage of our reality

By: Daliborka Uljarevic

**Until that moment, which will be fiercely resisted by the existing rulers, because deep inside they know they have been left behind the times, the rest of us can continue to watch the political theatre ever day, in hyper-realistic forms and without “aesthetics of responsibility”, whereas our artists stand aside waiting for opportunities and glory to just happen to them while they sip their drinks with noble gall.**

“We all think that our political views are based on reason, even though in fact they are already formed in childhood, before we ever understood what is going on. An adult is a child who suffered”. This thought of the amazing Canadian writer **Nancy Huston** is in the catalogue of “Hypermnnesia”, a play recently performed in the Montenegrin National Theatre (MNT).

The play is a co-production of the Hearthefakt Fund and Bitez Theatre from Belgrade, directed by a young director from Sarajevo **Selma Spahić**. It arrived to Podgorica as part of the campaign for the establishment of RECOM (Regional fact-finding commission for war crimes and other serious violations of human rights), in cooperation with MNT.

The selection of “Hypermnnesia” for the promotion of RECOM isn’t accidental. Relying on the already popular form of “documentary theatre”, it is an excellent reminder of the power of suppressed or silenced memories to shape each of us as individuals, and our societies where we live with all these crimes, which are their integral part. It is hard to remember. Often unpleasant. This is why our organisms’ immune system responds by erasing bad memories. However, as much we try to convince ourselves, this won’t make them disappear. These remain somewhere deep within us, and they rage against suppression by weighing ever more heavily with their unspoken burden, which slowly but surely undermines everything erected upon foundations devoid of a clear look at ourselves, confrontation with our own weaknesses and mistakes, as well as of the ability to rise above our ego and admit the pain of others. And so, effectively and not so rarely, they resurface, destroying some irreparably good relations...

The artistic quality of the play is one of its facets. It is enough to say that it earned the prize of the jury of the International Association of Theatre Critics (IATC) at the 51 MESS 2011 International Festival, as well as high marks from renowned critics from the region and, of course, positive reactions from the audience.

The message of this play is another facet, intellectually captivating and emotionally moving. Equalising private and the political, it bravely approaches difficult questions, with are more or less familiar to us in Montenegro, but the decisions on such issues have been crucial to our big local stories. Crimes must not be forgotten, and facts must be established in an objective, systematic manner, which allows for many points of view, capacity for empathy and openness for different truths. And all this needs citizens who have faced their personal traumas, regardless of their depth, and moved on, strengthened by the cathartic scar of that experience.

In Montenegro there is yet no developed political theatre within the temples of culture, and it is not surprising that it is hard to come by activist engagement or socially critical discourse of our artists. There is also no established school of political psychology, and it is therefore small wonder that we are overwhelmed by those who should never be allowed to deal with such responsible work as politics is, and who are daily trying to confuse us with their own wonderings and interest-based ideological turns.

Centre for Civic Education (CCE) has repeatedly asked for official procedures of continuous checks of physical and mental preparedness of the members of law enforcement bodies. We have seen the

consequences of the lack of this practice in the brutal murder of the former boxer Aleksandar Pejanović.

I believe it would be useful to establish similar procedures not only for the police officers who should protect us, instead of being themselves explosives on two legs, but also for the decision-makers in politics. Those who pass such tests and thus prove their success in facing their own childhood, teenage and other traumas, would contribute to politics, which is less like theatre and more like building of a society based on respect for citizens, rule of law and clearly defined state interest.

Do tog trenutka, kojem će se postojeća garnitura grčevito opirati jer je negdje duboko u sebi svjesna svoje prevaziđenosti, nama svima ostaje da političko pozorište gledamo svakog dana u hiper-realnom obliku i bez “estetike odgovornosti”, a da naši umjetnici stoje sa strane čekajući da im se prilike, slava itd. jednostavno dese dok ispijaju piće sa uzvišenim jedom na sve oko sebe.

Until that moment, which will be fiercely resisted by the existing rulers, because deep inside they know they have been left behind the times, the rest of us can continue to watch the political theatre ever day, in hyper-realistic forms and without “aesthetics of responsibility”, whereas our artists stand aside waiting for opportunities and glory to just happen to them while they sip their drinks with noble gall.

*The author is executive director of Centre for Civic Education (CCE)*